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DEC,
1966

BOYS' LIFE

FOR
ALL
BOYS

In the spirit of the season, photographer Ozzie Sweet went searching for an un-Abominable Snowman and found one, laden with gifts, sliding the slopes of Vermont's Mad River Glen ski resort. The carrot-nosed snowman shouted Merry Christmas! and zoomed off into the hills, but not before Ozzie got his picture for our cover . . . Talking of gifts, we're unwrapping a special holiday song called **A Round**—a sparkling ditty made for Scouts . . . For capturing the joy of the season on film, John Durniak, editor of Popular Photography, sparks some cool ideas in **The 'Must' Pictures of Christmas** . . . And with this issue, U.S. Chess Champ Bobby Fischer starts his bimonthly feature titled **Checkmate**—a think-along-with-Bobby way of perking up your game . . . For the whodunit crowd, writer Fred Grove has come up with **Mystery of the Mountain Light**. The puzzle: Who's trying to kill a harmless elk—and how do the authorities stop the sinister sniper? . . . From the cool mountain climes we race to hot action in the tropics. The setting for **The Boy Who Cried Combat** is Hawaii in 1795, where hero Lono runs a desperate race to warn his people that King Kamehameha is coming to attack them . . . Then back to real life and grandeur—a hiking tour of **The Grand Grand Canyon** . . . Now, let's meet:

BOBBY FISCHER



When Bobby writes about chess it's worth reading. In 1957 he won the U.S. Chess Championship for the first time—at the age of 14—and won or drew every single game in the U.S. chess competition for the next four years. He's held seven U.S. championships; all told, in the 1963-64 U.S. chess championship, Bobby turned in an unprecedented feat, winning all 11 games.

FRED GROVE



The author of **Mystery of the Mountain Light** (p. 52) is a native Oklahoman of Osage Indian descent. So, it's easy to see why he's written many Westerns, and won two Spur awards from Western Writers of America and one Western Heritage Wrangler award for a story printed in **Boys' Life**. Fred's latest novel, **Buffalo Spring** (Double-day), will be published soon. So lasso a copy.

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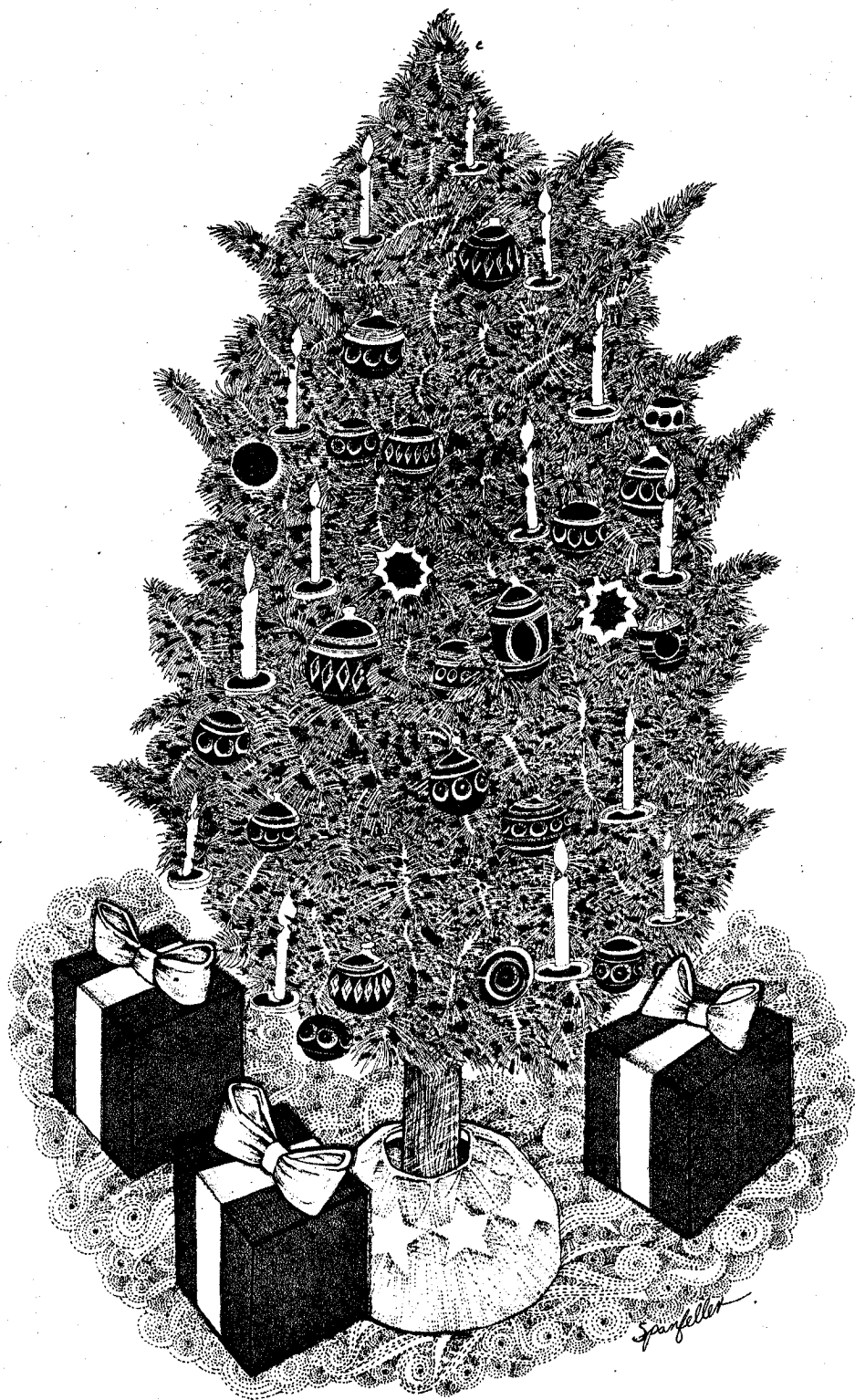
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DESIGNER: BOB CROZIER



THE TREE IS THE SAME

**What do you do if you're a
basketball champ in a land
where they insist that you
risk life and limb on skis?**

By JACK RITCHIE

BOYS' LIFE ■ DECEMBER 1966



"DON'T you like winter sports?" Lothar asked.

I looked out of the living room window at all that snow and cold and the skaters on the pond. "I wouldn't go out in weather like that except to defend my country."

Lothar was puzzled. "But it is ideal and invigorating. Only a few degrees below zero centigrade. In the United

States, did you do nothing at all during the winter?"

"Sure," I said. "I played basketball. And you do that indoors."

The thing is that I never wanted to come here in the first place.

Back home Stevenson High would be playing Madison Tech tonight and I should be in the lineup at right forward. But here I was attending this

Liechtenstein Gymnasium—which is what they call a high school over here.

I never paid much attention to this exchange-student caper until it struck me, but every year it seems Liechtenstein sends one of its kids over to Stevenson High and we ship one of ours back—a one-for-one trade and hope for the best.

My trouble is that my parents make

me study and when you study, you get good marks and you're right up there on the list when some committee thinks it's handing out favors. But even then I didn't really expect to come here, because I was second in the Honor Roll standings for the year.

Dan Brewster is the one who's supposed to be here, but then at the last minute he caught himself mumps and



Uncle Friedrich's stem turn turned into a tangle of legs, arms and skis.

the next thing I know it is me, Bill Brown, in the library, looking up Liechtenstein to find out what it is.

The place turns out to be a small country of about 16,000 people stuck between Switzerland and Austria. It's smaller than the District of Columbia. There's a Prince and a Princess, but they don't have any army. Anyone who collects postage stamps might know

about Liechtenstein because the government issues a lot of special stamps.

When I got here, I was a little surprised to find that they have electricity and phones and stuff like that, even though they still drive cows back to the barn through the streets of Vaduz, which is the capital town and the place where the Gebhardts live.

They're the people I board with, the

Gebhardts, and there's Lothar, who's my age and size and in my class, and his father and his mother and his younger brother, Hans, whom they call The Informer, and their Uncle Friedrich.

Lothar had been trying to sell me on ice skating and now he tried something else. "In this country almost everybody skis."

Hans held one of the stamps from his album to the light and studied it thoughtfully. "Especially Uncle Friedrich. He has more wax on his skis than anybody in Liechtenstein."

Uncle Friedrich blushed. He's a tall man who's cheerful about anything you can lay a hand on and he always wears a glad muffler when he goes outside. (To page 65) ➤

THE TREE IS THE SAME

(Continued from page 29)

The only sport I'm good at is basketball. I mean that's my game and I was a dead cinch for the first team back at Stevenson. And here they want me to take up skating or skiing and break a leg.

I closed the magazine I'd been trying to read and went upstairs to write another letter home. When I finished, I put on my cap and jacket for the walk to the mailbox.

At the head of the stairs, I could hear them still talking.

"It has been almost three months," Mr. Gebhardt said, "But I am afraid that he is still unhappy here."

Mrs. Gebhardt agreed. "Could he be hungry?"

"He might be sick for his home," Lothar said, "Though one would suppose that he would outgrow that by now."

Hans the Informer spoke up. "I think he is homesick for basketball. This apparently is his whole life."

"But what can we do about this?" Mr. Gebhardt asked. "There is no basketball-playing here. There are no teams."

I made some noise going down the stairs and Mrs. Gebhardt came out of the living room.

"Perhaps I can bake you an apple pie? All Americans like apple pie, do they not?"

"No," I said and opened the front door. "I've known some that prefer blueberry."

When I got back, Hans looked up from the pages of a booklet on winter sports. "How does ice hockey strike you, Bill?" Or sled-dog racing?"

I took a deep breath. I guessed they were going to keep at it if it took all winter. "All right," I said. "I'll take a stab at skiing."

On Saturday afternoon, Uncle Friedrich strapped two pairs of Lothar's skis to the carrier on the roof of his car. He drives a 1939 Ford, but he gives it loving care and it's in mint condition.

"This automobile is not forced to depend upon air-cooling," he said. "In the winter I resort to the more reliable antifreeze." He patted the hood proudly. "And the motor is up front. Where it belongs."

We drove only about a mile out of Vaduz and then stopped at the side of the road and got out. I stood there looking around—anywhere but at the skis. The houses of the town were down there in a kind of huddle and the tall spire of the church stuck up in a Christmas card way. Back of it you could see a lot of mountain peaks that were the Swiss Alps.

Uncle Friedrich put his hands behind his back and surveyed the ski slope. "The length of a pair of skis should reach to the middle of the palm when the arm is raised straight over the head. In the last few years there has been a move toward the use of shorter skis—some as short as two-and-a-half feet—however I still prefer the longer lengths."

He took the skis off the car and handed a pair to me and one to Lothar. "Modern skis are made out of any number of materials—ash and hickory, laminated or solid, laminated wood and metal, metal, fiber glass and what have you—and just about all of them, with the possible exception of some skis with a special finishing, are required to be waxed before they are used."

I bent down to put on my skis and while I was working with the bindings on my right ski, the left one suddenly took off by itself down the slope. I reached for it, lost my balance, and went down to the sitting position.

"Congratulations," Uncle Friedrich said, "You have made your first *sitzmark*."

I looked up at him and so he cleared his throat. "I'll leave you with Lothar. As for myself, I will go on to a slope near Triesenberg. I shall return in an hour or so."

When he was gone, Lothar first showed me how to walk on skis and that didn't

exactly send a thrill of excitement roaring through my veins.

He went on to the next step, which is skating on a slight descent. By the time Uncle Friedrich came back, Lothar had got on to snowplow and the snowplow turns.

Uncle Friedrich beamed. "How is he doing, Lothar? Splendid, no?"

Lothar rubbed his neck. "Well... this is his first lesson. I think there will be much improvement after this."

I almost smiled because I knew for positive certain that there wasn't going to be any more improvement.

It was like this. I just wanted to be let alone. I wanted to put in my time in this here country with the least sweat and then get out. But I had it pegged that the Gebhardts wouldn't leave me alone until I gave something a try and failed.

And I was going to fail if I had to work nights to do it.

During the next three weeks, Lothar tried hard, but we never got past the stem turn and I was leaving *sitzmarks* all over the place except once when he went to the car for something and I was fooling around by myself. I did a couple of

Sneaky way to get the Remington you want this Christmas.

You're hoping to get a certain Remington gun this Christmas. But how do you let your family know the exact model you want?

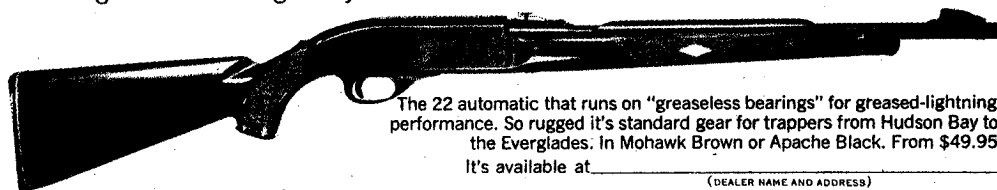
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On Mom's vanity table. On the kitchen table.) P. S. Remington ammunition makes a dandy Christmas present, too.

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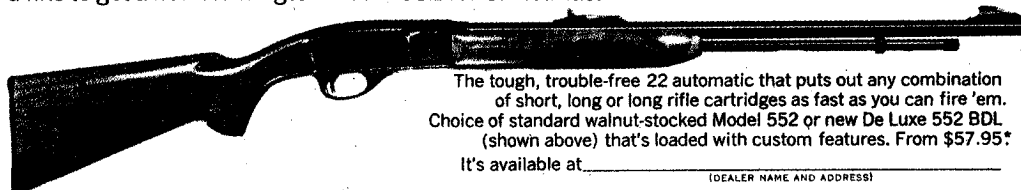


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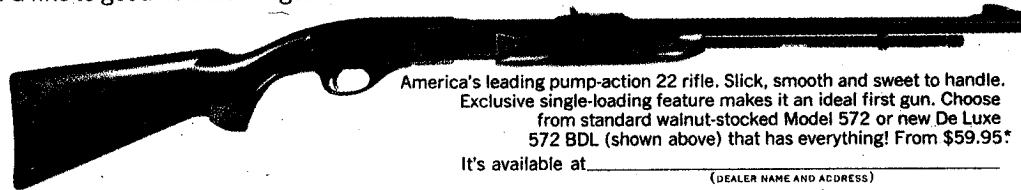


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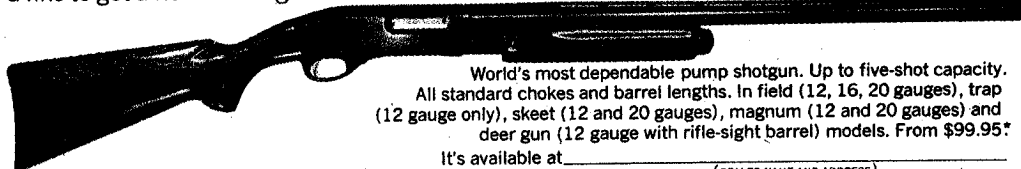


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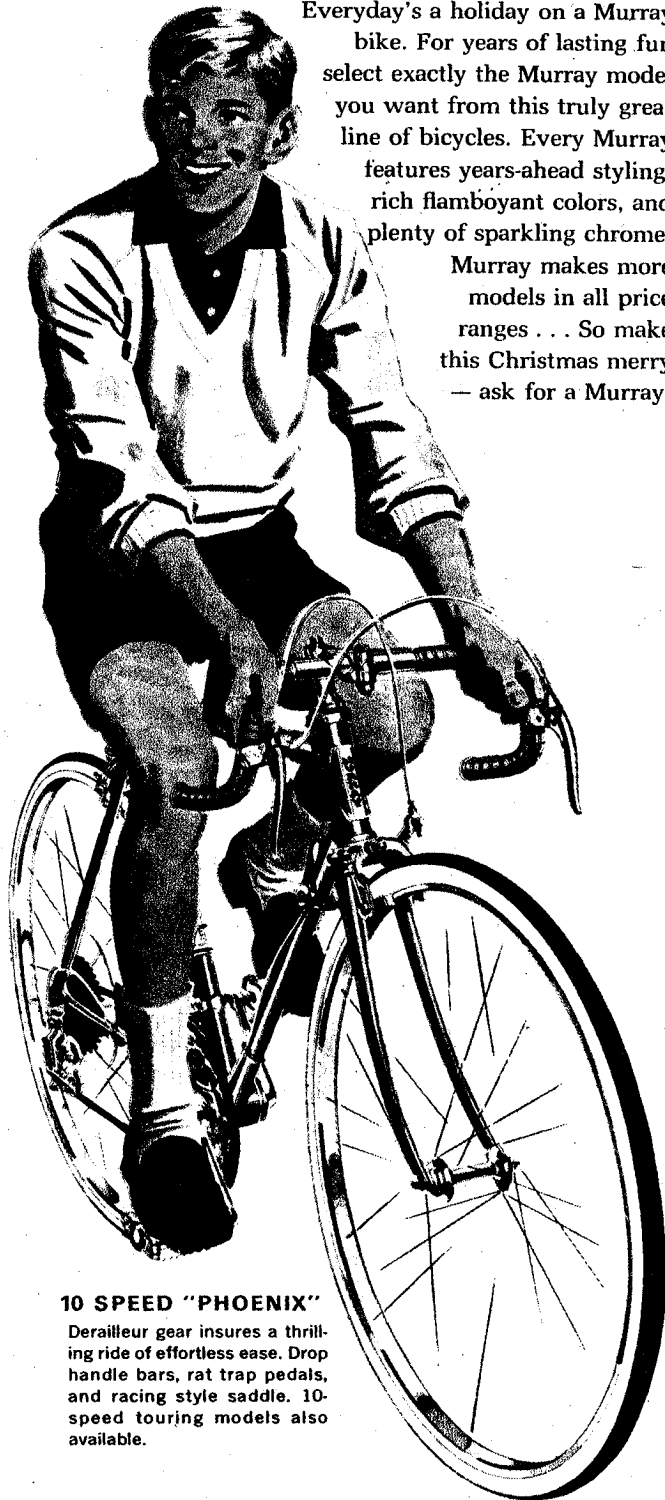
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THE TREE IS THE SAME

(Continued from page 65)

pretty good turns and made quite a run before falling. Better watch that! I told myself.

Toward the middle of December my technique was getting worse and I thought that I finally had the situation just about licked. Lothar looked like he was about to give up on me and he was just building up enough nerve to tell me. I guess he figured it might break my heart.

When the mail came the week before Christmas, my folks included a newspaper clipping of the Stevenson High game with Park Lane, which we won 68 to 53. There was a swell action picture of Hank Talbert, who took my place at right forward. If things had been different, it could just as well have been me.

I was brooding about that when Hans the Informer came into the room.

"Lothar has already bought his personal Christmas present to you," he said. "Do you want to know what it is?"

"No."

"It is a real American basketball," Hans said. "It was shipped through the mail deflated, but I suppose it can be blown up with the air pump at any petrol station?"

Big deal, I thought. So Lothar wants to give me a basketball for Christmas. "What am I supposed to do with it? Organize a world tournament?"

"He did not take me into his confidence," Hans said. "I merely spied through the keyhole when he opened the package. Perhaps he believes that you will be less unhappy bouncing a basketball here and there."

After supper, when I sat down to do some homework, I happened to notice the empty cardboard mailing carton in the wastebasket. It was addressed to Lothar and it was evidently the container in which the basketball had been shipped. I pushed it under some of the crumpled-up paper so that I wouldn't see it any more.

The next evening my eyes happened to light on the wastebasket again. The cardboard box was still there. I scratched my head, because I remembered seeing Mrs. Gebhardt empty out the thing that morning.

I picked up the box. It was the container for a basketball all right and had the same return address, only this one was addressed to Mr. Gebhardt.

I sighed. Was I going to get *two* basketballs for Christmas?

Boy, I thought, don't they ever compare notes?

Hans the Informer spoke to me later. "Do you know what I'm buying you for Christmas?"

"Sure," I said. "A basketball."

He shook his head. "No. A whistle. I have seen this game of basketball played on the newsreel sports features at the cinema and not a moment goes by when a whistle is not blown. Every player has one, does he not?"

Saturday turned out to be a nice sunny day, but Lothar had a cold and that canceled my ski lesson. In the afternoon I put a sandwich in my pocket and decided to take a little walk for myself.

As I turned into a small valley, I noticed Uncle Friedrich's car parked alone by the side of the road and when I looked up at the top of the hill I saw him

poised there on skis.

He used his ski poles to push off and down he came, nice and graceful for about a 150 feet—the red muffler flying—and then it happened.

He tried to make a stem turn and in one second everything was arms and legs and skis and snow. The whole mess came down my way and stopped about a dozen feet short of me.

He brushed the snow from his face and saw me. His face got slowly red.

"It can happen to the best of them," I said.

He exhaled slowly. "Yes. And to the worst of them too."

A thought came to me and I frowned slightly. "Don't tell me that you're just *learning* how to ski?"

He nodded sadly. "I have been *learning* for 20 years. Unfortunately it appears that I completely lack the aptitude for this type of adventure."

He rose and dusted off snow. "In all modesty, I believe that I am an authority on skiing—its history, its techniques, its possibilities. There is only one deficiency. I cannot ski. And so I sit and wax my skis at the chalets and converse expertly on the subject, but no one has actually seen me ski, for I take pains to find secluded valleys. I think that no one really suspects except Hans the Informer and he has had the kindness not to make this information public."

He studied me and his face suddenly brightened. "By Ludvig! I think I have it! There has suddenly come to me the old saying invented by George Bernard Shaw. *'He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches'*. If you will put yourself into my hands, Villyam, I am certain that I can teach you how to ski."

I shook my head. "It just wouldn't work. Lothar's tried."

He rewound the scarf around his neck. "You have created a new horizon for me, William. Under my tutelage, you will soar to new heights. You will become expert. The lessons will be my Christmas gift to you and we start immediately on the 26th."

My voice got sharp. "No. And that's final. I don't go too much for this ski business."

He stared at me more carefully this time, leaning forward a little. "Ah," he said quietly. "You do not go for *any* business? If it is in Liechtenstein? You simply do not *wish* to try?"

Maybe I got a little red.

He looked back up the slope and he seemed a little discouraged. "Life is occasionally a disappointment here and there, is it not? One must grow and face them and try not to make things too unpleasant for those around him." He looked at his watch and managed a smile. "But time passes and I am commissioned to purchase a Christmas tree for the family. Would you care to join me in the search?"

"No," I said. "I guess not. I'm just taking a walk."

It was dark by the time I got back to good old Vaduz.

Up ahead, as she passed the lights of a small shop, I recognized Mrs. Gebhardt.

I hung back a little and watched as she went into this petrol—that's gasoline—station.

She talked to the man who ran it and then took a package out of her purse. She tore open the seal and took out what was inside.

I closed my eyes for a second and then watched as they walked over to the air pump and blew up the basketball.

On her way back home, when she thought that nobody was looking, she bounced the ball on a clear spot on the pavement a few times, but I guess it wasn't her game, because she put it back under her arm and carried it like that the rest of the way.

I watched as she went back around to the rear of the Gebhardt house and hid the ball in the shed. It looked as if she was keeping her present for me a secret from the rest of the family too.

I went back around to the front of the house. Through the window, I could see that they'd put the Christmas tree in a stand in the living room, but they hadn't gotten around to decorating it yet. Maybe they were waiting for me.

I decided that it was still another hour before supper and I might as well spend it walking.

There were lights in practically every window I passed and you knew that inside there was the smell of supper and pine trees and the Christmas cookies and *Kuchen* that they'd been baking every day the past week.

After a while it started snowing—the big kind of flakes that just come and lie down soft and pretty soon there was a new layer over everything and all you needed was sleigh bells.

When I finally came back to the Gebhardts and opened the door, I found Mr. Gebhardt and Uncle Friedrich playing chess and Lothar and Hans reading and it seemed pretty quiet to me.

Mrs. Gebhardt spoke. "There was a transatlantic telephone call for you just 10 minutes ago. We did not know where you were and so we could not call you. However your father said that he would call again at seven, our Liechtenstein time."

I looked at the wall clock. It was almost six. "Did you get a chance to talk to him?"

Mrs. Gebhardt seemed a little reluctant. "Well . . . yes. For a few seconds. Perhaps a minute or two."

I frowned. "Was there anything wrong?"

"Oh, no," Mrs. Gebhardt said quickly. "It is good news for you, I think. I will let your father tell you."

And everybody was quiet again.

"I will put supper on the table," Mrs. Gebhardt said finally.

"Nothing for me, Mrs. Gebhardt," I said. "I guess I'm a little too excited to

eat right now."

And it turned out that nobody else wanted to eat right then either and so we all went back to quiet again.

I looked at the boxes of ornaments on the table, nice shiny Christmasy ornaments. Why didn't they start decorating the tree instead of just sitting around and pretending to play chess or read newspapers?

After a while I picked up a magazine.

And finally at seven the telephone call came through and I heard my dad's voice.

I swallowed before I could say hello. I mean it's a long way to home.

"Bill," Dad said, "Dan Brewster's recovered from the mumps."

"Well, good," I said, but I figured that he should have been over them months ago and so why bring it up now?

Dad cleared his throat. "How would you like to come home for Christmas?"

I blinked. "Home for Christmas?"

"That's right. I talked to the principal at Stevenson and he saw Dan, and it seems that Dan's still willing to go right over there now and take over. What I mean is that we've been getting your letters and . . . well . . . reading between the lines. You don't have to go through with this whole thing any more, Bill. You ought to be able to make it back in plenty of time before Christmas."

I looked up at the Gebhardts. They were all trying to look busy, but I guess they knew what was going on.

What in the world were they going to do with all those basketballs?

And that doggone whistle?

I swallowed again and that was the second time today.

"How about it?" Dad asked. "Are you ready to come home?"

I took a deep breath. The country might be different, but the Christmas tree is the same.

"Heck, no," I said. "Dan's not going to push me out of this deal. I'm just getting to like this place and I've got my heart set on learning how to ski."

When I was through and hung up, the Gebhardts looked as if they wanted to smile, but were waiting for permission.

I wished somebody else would say something first.

Hans the Informer finally broke the ice. "Let us attack supper immediately. Mama has a surprise blueberry pie for dessert."

CHRISTMAS

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